



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD - **Public Hearing**

Conrail Derailment in Paulsboro, NJ with Vinyl Chloride Release

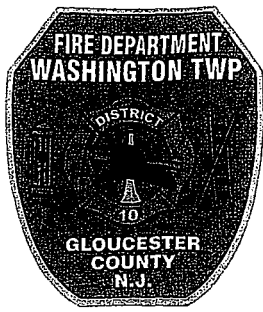
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EXHIBIT	
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Agency / Organization

Gloucester County

Title

Notice to Gloucester County Fire Chiefs  
and Fire Officers Association



**WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT**  
**TOWNSHIP OF WASHINGTON**  
**GLOUCESTER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

Board of Fire Commissioners  
P.O. Box 653  
Turnersville, N.J. 08012-0653

**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
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**EMERGENCY**  
**9-1-1**

December 10, 2012

To the members of the Gloucester County Fire Chiefs and Fire Officers Association,

It is with regret that despite the many warnings of disrepair and lack of preparation signaled to the county, recent events led the Washington Township Board of Fire Commissioners (BOFC) to order the withdraw of all of its firefighters from participating in the Gloucester County CBRNE (HAZMAT) Team and from providing technical DECON to Gloucester County. This order became effective at 2130 hours on December 6, 2012 and does not reflect on the support from many fire departments around Gloucester County. Notification was made to the Gloucester County Emergency Response Center supervisor with a request to notify the appropriate chain of command. A confirmation that the higher chain of command had been notified was forwarded from the center at 2159 hours.

The Washington Township BOFC reached its decision after being presented with testimony from both HAZMAT team members and DECON team members who responded to Paulsboro on 11/30 as part of the HAZMAT and DECON teams. With one of the most complex HAZMAT incidents on the East Coast in more than a decade occurring within Gloucester County, team members from our fire department serving as HAZMAT technicians and as the DECON team were abandoned by supervisory HAZMAT personnel employed by the county and were left with equipment on CBRNE 1 which was inoperable and out of service.

Due in no small part to the multiple pieces of monitoring devices that were inoperable, our firefighters were unnecessarily exposed to highly toxic Vinyl Chloride gas, a known carcinogen. Without the tools necessary to affect a proper response and to provide vital technical information, not only were other emergency workers unnecessarily exposed but so was the general public in the first few hours when local and county resources were the primary responders.

Over the past several years, our department has reported to the county agents responsible for HAZMAT and DECON, numerous failures with equipment, training, procedures, and leadership to no avail. The failure to implement corrective action has left our fire department no choice but to withdraw from participating in county HAZMAT related activities to avoid causing further harm to our firefighters.

The Washington Township Fire Department has and will continue to share our resources with our neighboring fire departments throughout Gloucester County in the form of

training, fire prevention, rescue, technical rescue, or general firefighting mutual aid by providing whatever capabilities we have at our disposal and can afford to send. We further welcome reciprocal mutual aid when and where it is available. We will continue to support the Gloucester County Fire Chiefs and Fire Officers Association in its mission and for the betterment of public fire protection in our own jurisdiction and throughout Gloucester County. We will consider future participation in HAZMAT response in Gloucester County if and when there is significant change in the leadership and observable change in the operations of the CBRNE (HAZMAT) Team.

Submitted,



\*\*\* P I I \*\*\*

Everett John Hoffman  
Fire Chief

Cc: BOFC  
Mayor Barbara Wallace  
file